



NEWS FROM NOAA

NATIONAL OCEANIC & ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION • US DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

Contact: Aja Sae-Kung, NOAA
(202) 482-6090
Dr. Quenton Dokken, GoMF
(361) 882-3939

NOAA05-R963
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
September 27, 2005

NOAA AWARDS \$500,000 FOR HABITAT RESTORATION ALONG THE GULF OF MEXICO

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) awarded a \$500,000 grant to the Gulf of Mexico Foundation in the second year of a multi-project partnership to restore habitat vital to Gulf of Mexico coastal fisheries.

This year's grant award is part of the second multi-year restoration effort coordinated among NOAA, Gulf of Mexico Foundation (GoMF), and the EPA's Gulf of Mexico Program. Funding for restoration activities began in 2001, and will continue to support projects that benefit the coastal habitats of the five Gulf States. These projects improve fisheries by providing nursery areas and food sources for commercially and recreationally fished species. The objective is to restore marine, estuarine, and riparian habitats, including salt marshes, seagrass beds, oyster reefs, coral reefs, mangrove forests, shellfish beds, and freshwater spawning and rearing habitats. An increase in funding for this year's activities will allow GoMF and NOAA to boost the participation of organizations in the U.S. Caribbean territories while maintaining the level of participation by organizations working in the five Gulf Coast states.

"Our partnership with the Gulf of Mexico Foundation allows NOAA to fund numerous projects along the gulf coast that restore and enhance fishery habitat while educating communities about the importance of coastal resource management," said retired Navy Vice Adm. Conrad C. Lautenbacher, Ph.D., under secretary of commerce for oceans and atmosphere and NOAA administrator. "Increasing environmental literacy is a key mission within NOAA, and this grant provides the tools and funding necessary to support activities that promote environmental stewardship and a conservation ethic in coastal communities."

"For an example of a successful and productive environmental partnership of the Federal and Gulf State governments and the private sector, one needs only to look at the Community Based Restoration Partnership between NOAA, the EPA's Gulf of Mexico Program, the five Gulf States, and the Gulf of Mexico Foundation," said Dr. Quenton Dokken, executive director of the Gulf of Mexico Foundation. "Since 2001, this partnership has supported 25 marine habitat restoration projects in the Gulf States leveraging more than twice the state and federal funds committed to these projects. 2005-06 promises to be an even more productive year across the Gulf States and U.S. Caribbean territories."

The goal of the Gulf of Mexico Foundation is to promote ecological preservation and conservation through community stewardship and collaborative partnerships. GoMF will continue to work with the state Gulf Ecological Management Site managers, the EPA Gulf of Mexico Program and NOAA Fisheries to identify and implement habitat restoration projects. Past projects funded through the NOAA Restoration Center partnership with GoMF include the removal of invasive species from preserved land on the upper Texas coast, the restoration of seagrass beds damaged by prop scarring in Florida, and the development of a plant nursery to support tidal marsh restoration efforts in Mississippi.

The NOAA Restoration Center Community-based Restoration Program (CRP) is a financial and technical assistance program that promotes strong partnerships at the national, regional, and local level to restore fisheries habitat. NOAA CRP works with organizations and government to support locally-driven habitat restoration projects in marine, estuarine, and riparian areas. NOAA CRP funds on-the-ground habitat restoration projects that (1) offer educational and social benefits for citizens and their communities, and (2) provide long-term ecological benefits for fishery resources. Since 1996, more than 900 projects in 26 states have been implemented using NOAA funding and leveraged funding from national and regional habitat restoration partners.

Each year, NOAA awards approximately \$900 million in grants to members of the academic, scientific and business communities to assist the agency in fulfilling its mission to study the Earth's natural systems to predict environmental change, manage ocean resources, protect life and property and provide decision makers with reliable scientific information. NOAA goals and programs reflect a commitment to these basic responsibilities of science and service to the nation for the past 35 years.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, an agency of the U.S. Commerce Department, is dedicated to enhancing economic security and national safety through the prediction and research of weather and climate-related events and providing environmental stewardship of our nation's coastal and marine resources. Through the emerging Global Earth Observation System of Systems (GEOSS), NOAA is working with its federal partners and nearly 60 countries to develop a global monitoring network that is as integrated as the planet it observes.

On the Web:

NOAA: <http://www.noaa.gov>

Community-based Restoration Program: <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/habitat/restoration>

Gulf of Mexico Foundation: <https://www.gulfmex.org>